UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/51/287
14 August 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-first session
Item 72 (c) of the provisional agenda*

REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCLUDING DOCUMENT OF THE TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: REGIONAL CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By its resolution 50/71 B of 12 December 1995, the General Assembly, inter alia, reaffirmed its support for the programme of work of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and urged States members of the Committee to implement the specific measures they had already adopted within the framework of the Committee's work programme. The Assembly also requested me to continue to provide assistance to States members of the Committee and to report to the Assembly at its fifty-first session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report, focusing on the activities of the Committee in the period since the adoption of resolution 50/71 B, is submitted in fulfilment of that request.

2. During the reporting period, the work of the Committee intensified and expanded significantly. Consultations and more formal meetings took place at various levels as States members of the Committee continued to address the persistent threats to peace and security in the Central African subregion with a view to promoting sustainable measures of confidence-building and arms restraint and preventing further turmoil in the area.

3. I followed developments in the subregion closely and attended in person the first meeting of heads of State and Government of States members of the Committee which was held at Yaoundé on 8 July 1996. I reaffirmed to the Committee the support of the United Nations for its goals and objectives. On

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* A/51/150.

23 June 1996, prior to the summit, I met at Geneva with Mr. Destin Arsène Tsaty-Boungou, Foreign Minister of the Congo, in his capacity as President of the Bureau of the Committee. He briefed me on the Committee's priorities and plans with regard to the implementation of its programme of work. In addition, Mr. Prvoslav Davinić, Director of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs in the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, represented me at the Committee's eighth ministerial meeting held at Yaoundé from 15 to 19 April 1996, and delivered a statement on my behalf. That meeting was chaired by His Excellency Mr. Simon Achidi Achu, Prime Minister and Head of Government of Cameroon. The Secretariat also provided substantive support to the ministerial meeting of the Committee's Bureau held at Brazzaville on 14 and 15 June 1996.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE MINISTERIAL AND SUMMIT MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE IN 1996

4. Concern over continued tensions and conflict in the subregion and the seemingly growing threat that the situations of violence and instability could deteriorate further, especially in the Great Lakes area, greatly influenced the discussions of the Committee during the reporting period. It was recognized from the outset of the eighth ministerial meeting that the increasingly dangerous situation in the subregion needed to be examined by member States at the highest political level with a view to evolving a concrete subregional plan of action.

5. Both at the eighth ministerial meeting at Yaoundé and at the Bureau meeting at Brazzaville, it was felt that while the primary responsibility for resolving the political and security problems in the Central African subregion rested with the Governments and peoples of the countries concerned, concerted action at the subregional and wider levels was required to promote lasting solutions. The summit meeting therefore offered a historic opportunity to begin to chart a strategy for effective subregional cooperation on issues of peace and security. At the same time, the ministers reaffirmed the important need for continued and intensified international support, especially for efforts to halt the proliferation of weapons in Central Africa, to diffuse potentially catastrophic situations and to meet the critical humanitarian needs of millions of refugees and displaced persons in the area.

6. At their meeting on 8 July 1996, the heads of State and Government of Committee member States set out a course of action on subregional security cooperation and outlined a number of specific measures to be taken to that end. They emphasized the urgent need to avert future conflicts, both within and between States in the subregion.

7. Among the specific measures agreed upon by the heads of State and Government were the following:

(a) The creation, promotion and support of good governance and participatory democracy;

(b) The organization, under United Nations auspices, of seminars to promote a sustainable culture of peace and democratic responsibility within the armed forces, the paramilitary forces (gendarmerie) and the police forces of States members of the Standing Advisory Committee;

(c) The adoption and implementation of subregional confidence-building measures, including in particular the signature and effective observance of the Non-Aggression Pact among Central African States;

(d) The implementation, with the assistance of the United Nations and the international community as a whole, of a disarmament programme designed to deal with the problem of the uncontrolled proliferation of weapons;

(e) The establishment, under United Nations auspices, of a subregional early-warning mechanism to monitor developments in Central Africa with a view to preventing potential crises or tensions from degenerating into armed conflicts;

(f) The designation, within the armed forces and the paramilitary and police forces of States members of the Committee, of specialized units for possible deployment with United Nations and/or Organization of African Unity (OAU) peace missions;

(g) The convening, on a regular basis, of meetings of heads of State and Government, within the framework of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, to examine peace and related security issues in the subregion.

8. At the summit, the heads of State and Government of the following eight States members of the Committee formally signed the Non-Aggression Pact: Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe and Zaire. They also requested their ministers to elaborate, urgently and jointly, the practical modalities for an effective programme to curb the proliferation of weapons in Central Africa and to examine with United Nations officials concrete ways and means to bring the proposed early-warning mechanism into existence and to ensure its functioning.

9. Cognizant of the financial and other material resources required to implement fully and effectively their programme for subregional stability, the Central African leaders called for enhanced cooperation with bilateral and multilateral donors in a shared partnership for peace and security in the subregion. They conveyed their deep gratitude to those donors that had already contributed or planned to contribute to the trust fund set up by the United Nations to receive voluntary contributions to help finance the implementation of the programme of work of the Committee.

III. OTHER RELATED ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES IN 1996

10. Member States continued to set up national committees to ensure effective follow-up at the national level to advance the work and the objectives of the Committee. They also continued to take the necessary practical steps to

designate within their respective armed forces specialized units for possible deployment with future United Nations and/or OAU peace operations.

11. With regard to the peace units, the General Assembly, by its resolution 50/71 B, welcomed with satisfaction the decision by the States members of the Committee to establish such units. It also welcomed the participation by some of those States in the peace operations deployed in the subregion and called upon States Members of the United Nations and governmental and non-governmental organizations to promote and to facilitate the holding of a training programme on peace operations in the subregion with a view to strengthening the capacity of such units. The Secretariat, in cooperation with the International Peace Academy and with funding from the Government of Japan, will shortly organize in Yaoundé, the first training programme on peace operations for senior military and civilian officials of Central African States. The session is designed to train officials who, upon their return home, would serve as instructors and help prepare the units set up within their respective national forces.

12. There were growing indications, in 1996, of increasing efforts to foster transparency and inter-State cooperation on military and security matters in the subregion. States members of the Committee, at their eighth ministerial meeting in April, agreed in principle on the confidence-building value of a subregional arms register to monitor weapons acquisitions and transfers in Central Africa with a view to their control and reduction. Stressing their conviction that instability in any African country threatened the security of the region as a whole, they also showed growing interest in contributing to the peaceful resolution of existing conflicts in Central Africa. Members of the Committee's Bureau plan to visit Angola, Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire to convey the support and encouragement of other Central African States to such efforts in Angola and the Great Lakes region. The President of the Bureau is also scheduled to hold discussions with the former Tanzanian President, Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, in his capacity as the OAU peace facilitator for the Great Lakes region. The Committee has stressed the importance of a coordinated African response to facilitate the quest for a satisfactory solution to the complex problems in that part of the Central African subregion.

13. States members of the Standing Advisory Committee continued to reaffirm in 1996 their support for the democratization process in the subregion. In my meeting at Geneva on 23 June with the President of the Bureau, he informed me that members of the Committee, based on their conviction that lasting peace in the subregion would be facilitated in the long term under conditions of democracy and good governance, had decided to hold a subregional conference in December 1996 on the topic "Democratic institutions and peace in Central Africa". The meeting, scheduled to take place in Brazzaville, will examine, among other aspects, the rule of law and the role of the armed forces in a democratic system. The President of the Bureau also requested United Nations support and cooperation for the organization of the conference.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL ASPECTS

14. In its request to me to continue to provide assistance to States members of the Standing Advisory Committee, the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/71 B, also asked me to establish a trust fund to which States Members of the United Nations and governmental and non-governmental organizations might make additional voluntary contributions for the implementation of the programme of work of the Committee. On 18 March 1996, I established the United Nations Trust Fund for the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and invited Member States and governmental and non-governmental organizations to contribute to it. States members of the Committee pledged, shortly thereafter, to contribute to the Trust Fund, which has already received contributions from a number of Governments. The Governments of Cameroon and the Congo also made contributions in the form of material and other practical support for the organization of the Yaoundé summit on Central African security in July and the June meeting at Brazzaville of members of the Bureau of the Committee. In addition, the Government of Japan has made a contribution of $600,000 and several other Governments and organizations have indicated that they are considering the appeal for contributions.

15. In the face of the continuing financial crisis confronting the United Nations, ministerial meetings of the Committee have been reduced to one per year for the current biennium. Financial requirements for any additional meetings and activities during the biennium will have to be met from voluntary contributions.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

16. The first meeting at the level of heads of State and Government of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, and the Declaration issued on that occasion (A/51/274, annex), represent a milestone in the life of the Committee and in the quest for lasting peace and security in this turbulent subregion.

17. As developments in Burundi and throughout the Great Lakes region demonstrate, Central Africa continues, in 1996, to be confronted by enormous politico-military and security challenges undermining prospects for its socio-economic recovery and progress and threatening its long-term peace and stability. The political will shown by the subregional security summit was an unmistakable sign of commitment by States in the area to tackle at the highest political level and in a concerted manner the complex problems involved. I share the leaders' sense of concern and, indeed, anxiety. The potentially explosive nature of conflicts in Central Africa means that instability in any part of the subregion could affect the security of the area as a whole.

18. By their signature of the Non-Aggression Pact, the reaffirmation of their commitment to disarmament and their decision to pursue the creation of a subregional early-warning mechanism, the heads of State and Government have laid a strong foundation for a more promising future for Central Africa. The signature of the Pact by all States in the subregion and the effective and concrete implementation of the decisions taken by the heads of State and

Government would contribute to making the promise a reality. At the same time, I welcome the Standing Advisory Committee's collective recognition that the peace and security of the subregion can be assured in the long term only through respect for human rights, democratization, the rule of law and socio-economic development.

19. I greatly welcome and encourage the organization of the first training seminar in Central Africa to help prepare units designated by States members of the Committee for possible deployment in peace operations. I share the General Assembly's support for the decision by the States concerned to set up the units and to participate in future operations. That decision demonstrates a strong commitment by Central African countries to take concrete actions to promote subregional confidence-building and security cooperation. I also support the appeal to States Members of the United Nations and governmental and non-governmental organizations to help, through training, in strengthening the capacity of the Central African peace units and thus render them operational on short notice, when needed. I wish to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Japan for its generous financial contribution which made the organization of the first training programme possible and to the Government of Cameroon for hosting it and providing local logistical support.

20. The activities of the Standing Advisory Committee in 1996 have demonstrated, once again, that it is an instrument of much promise in efforts to end the scourge of violence and destruction in one of Africa's most unstable subregions. The Committee continues to show a great sense of responsibility and seriousness in handling delicate issues and challenges. It should therefore continue to receive the support and encouragement of the international community. I urge member States and the international community as a whole to contribute as generously as possible to the United Nations Trust Fund set up to enable the Committee implement its programme of work.